



# Washington State School for the Blind Superintendent

Location: Vancouver, Washington

## *Recruitment Announcement*

### ABOUT THE AGENCY

The primary purpose of the State School for the Blind (WSSB) is to educate children and youth who are blind and visually impaired (BVI) throughout the state of Washington. WSSB is unique in the fact that it is both a public school and a state agency providing “Basic Education” services to blind and visually impaired children addressing unique learning needs in order to reduce the opportunity gap for students with disabilities. The agency’s website is [www.wssb.wa.gov](http://www.wssb.wa.gov).

WSSB has a rich history of providing quality services to BVI children throughout the state. WSSB was

established in 1886 as a territorial school and has provided leadership and direction in the development of services to the BVI community for over 129 years. It is nationally accredited by the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (AdvancED) and serves as a statewide resource center providing direct and indirect services to students both on campus and in local communities. Services are provided to families, educators, blind consumers and others interested in assisting BVI youth in becoming independent and contributing citizens. Independence is the best single word to describe the ultimate goal of the school.



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As philosophical views have changed over the years, so has WSSB. Beginning in 1990, the school changed service delivery models from one of primarily a residential model to one that meets children, parents, and local school districts needs, not only on campus, but throughout the State. Since 1990, WSSB has increased the number of children being served thirty-fold through a diversification of service delivery models and the development of important and sustaining partnerships. Services are provided to over 2,000 students per year, with training made available to over 300 teachers, para-professionals, parents and others working with the BVI on a yearly basis. Approximately 600,000 pages of braille are produced each year and over 50 thousand individuals access digital resources on a yearly basis.

WSSB provides statewide services from a base campus in Vancouver, WA. While most personnel are located in Vancouver; a number of teachers are located in communities throughout the state.

### **Vision Statement:**

"Independence for Those Who Are Blind and Visually Impaired"

### **Mission Statement:**

To provide specialized quality educational services to visually impaired youth ages birth through 21 years of age.

WSSB believes all students have the right to a safe and stimulating learning environment and the right to an appropriate education. The school also believes that all students can benefit from intensive short-term placement options and a menu of services that can be provided through partnerships with public schools and educational service districts. WSSB is like a rotating door, which allows students to enter, learn a skill, return to their local district and then re-enter the school for additional intensive learning. It is this ease of movement, which helps improve the overall programs for BVI. No one school or agency can accomplish what these children need without a spirit of partnership, cooperation and sharing.

## **Washington State School for the Blind**

### **Example of Partners**

[not all inclusive]

- Governor's Office
- WSDS
- OSPI
- ESDs
- LEAs
- DSB
- CDHL
- Universities
- DOC
- C.I.
- Consumers
- DEL
- Private Found.
- Private Corps.
- PFBC
- National Orgs.
- COSB
- Parents



### **Statewide Service Delivery Model**

Thousands served through effective partnerships

### **Quality Indicators**

- Student outcomes
- Survey stakeholders
- National accreditation
- Follow-up studies
- Customer yearly feedback





## ABOUT THE POSITION

As the chief school administrator for the Washington State School for the Blind, the Superintendent has strategic and overall operational responsibility for the organization ensuring financial stability and organizational sustainability. The incumbent's scope of responsibilities includes not only on-campus programs, but services to blind and visually impaired children throughout the state. The responsibilities of the Superintendent are to carry out the mission of the school and continually examine better ways of providing quality services to BVI children. Outreach and off-campus activities in the distance-learning program are integral to the school's success and an important part of the Superintendent's role.

The Superintendent works closely with the Board of Trustees. Ten Trustees representing their respective U.S. Congressional Districts are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate and five ex-officio trustees representing blind consumers, unions and parents. The Trustees provide recommendations and advice to the Superintendent and Governor about services to BVI children. The Board of Trustees is an advisory board which plays a vital role in insuring that quality services are provided to blind/visually impaired children and youth. The Superintendent is appointed by the Governor. The Board assists with the hiring of the Superintendent by providing recommendations to the Governor.

The Superintendent oversees a staff of over 100 employees and an annual budget of more than \$8.7 million.





*Additional responsibilities of the Superintendent include the following:*

- Serve as the state's primary resource for BVI educational and accessibility issues.
- Create an environment that encourages and supports an entrepreneurial spirit in alignment with the strategic direction of the school.
- Provide a safe and nurturing environment to foster learning and independence.
- Is an agent for educational improvement and change in programs for the BVI and an advocate for improved programs/services for students.
- Establish sound working relationships and cooperative arrangements with the school's stakeholders.
- Facilitate and continue to improve the coordination and sharing of resources, establishment of new partnerships and programs.
- Serve as a consultant to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, provide instructional leadership, and assist school districts in improving their instructional programs for students with visual impairments.
- Facilitate educational reform for BVI children and helps ensure that changes which occur throughout the state helps to improve opportunities for the BVI, rather than creating new barriers.
- Develop and maintain positive and effective relations with the Board of Trustees, providing support, information and guidance.
- Work closely with blind consumer organizations, parents and unions.
- Enhance and evolve a statewide vision about quality services and an efficient statewide service delivery system for the BVI children.
- Coordinate and supervise all statewide programs; write, develop, implement and monitor the agency budget.
- Evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the agency operations.
- Maintain facilities, establish preventative maintenance programs and construct new facilities based upon program demands and legislative appropriations.







## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

- Developing new partnerships/programs/services to assist Washington in meeting the ever growing need for teachers of the blind/visually impaired, orientation and mobility instructors, certified administrators, and support staff.
- Continued development of accessible/usable online learning systems for blind/visually impaired students giving students throughout our state and the Pacific Northwest meaningful access to curriculum.
- Continue expansion of Birth – Three services, therefore providing excellent services that are not dependent on a parents location.
- Work in partnership with others to assist in the transition to Unified English Braille (UEB), WSSB has been part of a team in the development of a solid transition plan.
- As of the spring of 2016 WSSB will have completed it's re-accreditation process, which should provide the new superintendent with new information and data that will assist in the process of continual improvement of programs/services.



## REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

A masters degree from an accredited college or university in school administration or blind education, five years of experience teaching blind students in the classroom, and three years administrative or supervisory experience in programs for blind. Candidates should bring strengths in both external relations and high-level internal management, with an ability to balance the two.

The ideal candidate will possess strong community engagement skills and a desire to authentically collaborate with diverse stakeholder groups including providers, parents, coalitions, advocates, legislators, and health and social service providers. Passion for blind education is essential.

### *The preferred candidate will have demonstrated success in the following areas:*

- Strong leadership skills in program development in the area of education of BVI children.
- Experience working with government officials, heads of organizations, stakeholders and the media. The Superintendent must be comfortable and effective serving as a spokesperson for the organization.
- Excellent people skills and the ability to motivate individuals.
- Possess the ability to define and passionately articulate the school's mission and work to diverse audiences.
- Strong skills in strategic planning, facilitation, program innovation, and accountability.
- Entrepreneurial attitude and spirit to resolve issues of underserved and non-served students and families within Washington.
- Be committed to a culture of organizational transparency.



## APPLICATION PROCESS

**Persons interested in this position must submit a cover letter, salary history and a current resume.**

If you have questions regarding this announcement, please call Marissa Karras at 360-956-1336. The position will remain open until filled; however the screening process will move quickly. **In order to be considered for the first round of interviews please submit your application materials as soon as possible but no later than December 13<sup>th</sup> 2015 to [marissa@karrasconsulting.net](mailto:marissa@karrasconsulting.net). Interviews will be held in February with the new Superintendent identified by March 2016 and a start date of late May or Early June 2016.** The salary and benefits for this position are competitive.

The state of Washington is an equal opportunity employer and is strongly committed to enhancing the diversity of its workforce. We will provide assistance in the recruitment, application and selection process to applicants with disabilities who request such assistance.

## LIVE AND WORK IN A GREAT STATE

Washington State offers a total work/life package of pay, benefits, flexibility and workplace opportunities to help you get the most out of your career and out of life. Washington State is a great place to work, play, and be a part of a community. Washington offers a quality of life that is unsurpassed. From the high-energy urban center of Seattle, one of the nation's top-ranked cities, to the more relaxed pace of our rural communities, Washington's distinctive Northwest lifestyle blends a progressive, creative culture with a casual nature.

The Superintendent's position is located in Vancouver, Washington, which is located on the beautiful Columbia River and across the river from Portland, Oregon. Vancouver/Clark County is one of the fastest growing areas in the state and has close proximity to the mountains and ocean. Vancouver and the surrounding communities provide excellent schools, a great place to live and great place to raise a family. The state's capital city of Olympia is one hour and 45 minutes north of Vancouver.



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